

# *The Crisis of Political Philosophy*

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In my first lecture, I have tried to trace the crisis of our time to the crisis of political philosophy, and I suggested that a way out of the intellectual difficulties with which we are beset is a return to classical political philosophy and, in the first place, to Aristotle's *Politics*. In this lecture, I would like to discuss this return to Aristotle and the difficulties which seem to oppose it. Let me say only one more word about this crisis of political philosophy. I think it is no exaggeration to say that, generally speaking, political philosophy and even philosophy in general, has lost today its dignity and its status. Today, one can easily say that it is my philosophy to have two boiled eggs for my breakfast. What has happened to philosophy and, in particular, to political philosophy? The answer, I think, is clear.

There are two powers which are the recognized authorities in the Western world — in any Western country, especially in this country — which one can call positivism and historicism. Positivism is the view according to which only scientific knowledge, as defined by modern natural science, is genuine knowledge. This has the crucial implication that any assertions regarding values cannot be validated, but are mere subjective assertions. Historicism, on the other hand, is the view according to which the distinction between facts and values is ultimately not tenable because the highest principles of theoretical understanding, popularly called "categories," are inseparable from the highest principles of practice, popularly called "values," and that this "system," consisting of categories and values, is historically changeable: there is not *the* true system of categories and values. These are the two most powerful schools in the West today. Both are incompatible with political philosophy as an attempt to discover and to lay bare *the* true ends of man as man.

Positivism is in all respects, except one, inferior to historicism. Positivism, if it understands itself, will necessarily turn into historicism. For the basic premises of what is called science — that is to say, modern science — prove to be not evidently necessary; they are logically arbitrary, as they are admitted to be by the positivists themselves. This arbitrariness means, however, that they have been accepted in such a way that this was not merely an affair of this or that individual, but became a public factor that determined a whole period of history; it was a *historical* decision by virtue of which modern science became the power forming the modern world. Historicism, on the other hand, is more reflective than positivism because it raises a question which positivism cannot raise: *Why* science? It considers the human context out of which science stems, which positivism cannot genuinely do. Present-day positivism believes it can solve the problem simply by making a distinction between the validity of the findings of science and the genesis of science or of its findings. This distinction would make sense if science still could be understood as the perfection of the human intellect, the natural perfection of the human intellect; but no logical positivist can afford to say that. Therefore, he is forbidden to admit that the question, *Why* science?, must be raised, and he is surely unable to give an answer to that question. The relative merit which positivism has in this situation is that it asserts, in a very inadequate — not to say inept — manner, the notion of *the* one truth, or as it would probably prefer to call it, of objectivity. Political philosophy is an actuality in the West today only in Thomism. This creates a difficulty, however, even for the Thomists, because it gives rise to the suspicion that it is the Christian Catholic faith, and not human reason, which supports this political philosophy. Therefore, it is necessary even for the Thomists to show that the Aristotelian conception of political philosophy — Aristotle was not, after all, a Catholic Christian — has not been refuted by modern thought.

I have already indicated the specific grounds on which it is claimed that Aristotle's political philosophy has been refuted. The most common reason is that modern natural science, or modern cosmology, having refuted Aristotelian cosmology (e.g., by demonstrating "evolution"), has therewith refuted the principle or the basis of Aristotelian political philosophy. Aristotle took for granted the permanence of the species, and we "know" that the species are not permanent. But even granting that evolution is an established fact, that man has come into being out of another species, man is still essentially different from non-man. The fact of essential differences — the fact that there are "forms" — has in no way been refuted by evolutionism. The starting point of Aristotle, as well as of Plato, is that the whole consists of heterogeneous beings; that there is a noetic heterogeneity of beings, this common sensible notion on which we fall back all the time, and this has in no way been refuted. I remind you of the famous 17th

century criticism of formal causes, a criticism, which was properly presented in its most impressive form by a comic poet, Moliere, of the famous scholastic question, "Why does opium make men sleep?," and the answer, "*Quia est in eo virtus dormitiva, cujus est natura sensus assoupire*" (Because it has a dormitive power, a sleep-making power, the nature of which consists in putting the senses to sleep). This has been a famous joke repeated in this or that form innumerable often. It amounts to saying that reference to formal causes is in no way an explanation. But the joke is not so good as it appears at first hearing: if opium did not have sleep-making power, we would not be interested in it, if the ingredients of opium did not as such have this power; when you put together the elements out of which opium consists, then this whole has a character which the elements do not have, and this character is what makes opium opium. What is true of opium is true of man, as well as of any other being. It is, then, the notion of essence, of essential difference, which distinguishes the Aristotelian and the Platonic teaching from that of the characteristically modern philosophy, and especially modern science. If there are essential differences, there can be essential differences between the common good and the private good. However far the defeat of Aristotle's cosmology may extend, it does not go to the length of having destroyed the evidence of the concept of essential differences and, therefore, of essences.

The second argument, which is very common, is that Aristotle has been refuted because he was anti-democratic. I admit the fact, for I do not believe that the premises upon which some of our contemporaries seem to act — democracy is good and Aristotle is good — lead validly to the conclusion that Aristotle was a democrat. He was not a democrat. But on what grounds? Democracy meant at all times, in Greek times as well as today, the rule of all. But this is too abstract, because there is never unanimity, or hardly ever. In fact, in a democracy the majority rules. Yet, if there are stable majorities, then this stable majority will be in control in a democracy. What is that stable majority? Aristotle, in his great clarity and simplicity, said that in every *polis*, in every political society, there are two groups of people, the rich and the poor, and whatever may be the reason, the majority are the poor. Therefore, democracy is the rule of the poor. "Poor" does not mean "beggars." The poor are the people who have to earn their living, who cannot live as gentlemen. Because they are poor, they do not have the leisure for acquiring education, both sufficient theoretical and practical education, neither in maturity nor as children. They have no time for it; hence, they are uneducated. And no man in his senses would say that the political community should be ruled by the uneducated. This simple argument is in no way vicious as, I hope, you have seen. What is our argument against it?

Aristotle took something for granted which we can no longer take for granted. He took for granted that every economy would be an

economy of scarcity where the majority of men do not have leisure. We have discovered an economy of plenty and, in an economy of plenty, it is no longer true that the majority of people have to be uneducated. This is a perfectly legitimate reply to Aristotle as far as it goes. But we must see what precisely has changed. Not the principles of justice, they are the same. What has changed are the circumstances. On the very principle of justice, as Aristotle understood it, one would have to say that the argument regarding democracy as he stated it has to be modified because we have an economy of plenty. Yet this difference of circumstances is due to the modern economy, which in its turn is based on modern technology, which in its turn is based on modern science. Here we touch again on the fundamental difference between Aristotle and modern thought. A new interpretation of science, opposed to the Aristotelian interpretation, came to the fore in the 17th century in the works of Bacon, Descartes, and Hobbes. According to that new interpretation, science exists for the sake of human power and is not for the sake of understanding, as understanding, or of contemplation. As for this notion of science which is underlying the modern development, we have become doubtful whether it is as sound as it appeared for many generations. At the very latest, the explosion of the first atomic bomb made people doubtful whether the unlimited progress of science and technology is something unqualifiedly good. Not more than this is needed in order to see that Aristotle might have had a point when he denied that science is essentially in the service of the increase of human power.

Aristotle's non-democratic or anti-democratic view has apparently still another basis. This is his assumption, which he thought to be a fact, that men are by nature unequal in politically relevant respects. That they are unequal in regard to beauty would not be important, because we do not ordinarily elect officials on the ground of their being very handsome. But that there is a natural inequality regarding understanding, this is politically relevant. This kind of natural inequality can hardly be denied. The only serious attempt to deny it was made by the famous Russian biologist, Lysenko, with the assistance of Stalin, but I believe this attempt has been abandoned by Khrushchev, although I do not know it. This natural inequality is, of course, recognized by modern democracy, as is shown by our speaking of equality of opportunity, which implies that differently gifted people are supposed to do very different things with the opportunity offered. Differently stated, modern democracy is representative democracy, meaning a democracy which elects the people whom it believes are above the average. Modern democracy as representative democracy is opposed to direct democracy.

Another objection to Aristotle — and we come somewhat closer to the key issues — is that Aristotle's whole political philosophy is narrow, or provincial. After all, he was a Greek, and the subject

matter of his work is the Greek city-state, one particular form of human organization which was as important historically as any other, but which is just one among very many. This view is very common today, but it is not correct. Aristotle is not concerned with the Greek city-state. When you read the second book of the *Politics*, you see that he regarded a city like Carthage, which was a Phoenician city, as roughly equal to Sparta and definitely superior to Athens. The city-state is, then, not essentially Greek. This, however, is a minor difficulty. A more serious difficulty is this: When we speak of the city-state, we imply that there is such a thing called the "state," of which there are *n* various forms, one of them being the city-state. This thought cannot be translated into Greek; i.e., Aristotle's Greek. This concept of "state" is wholly alien to his thought. When we speak of "state" today, we ordinarily understand state in contradistinction to society. You will find it asserted in all textbooks that the Greek city — or let me now use the Greek word, "*polis*" — is not a state distinguished from a society. The *polis*, we may say, antedates the distinction of state and society. Aristotle does make a distinction between the *polis* and other associations or partnerships, but he does not bundle them all together under the title, "society," in contradistinction to the *polis*. His thought can be understood easily by every one of you if you only look at the right place for the modern equivalent of the concept of *polis*. That equivalent is our modern term, "the country." When you say the country is in danger, you do not make a distinction between the state and society. The country is the modern equivalent to what Aristotle understood by the city. Or look at another saying of somewhat questionable morality which still has a certain reasonableness, "my country right or wrong." You cannot possibly say, "my state right or wrong," or "my society right or wrong"; it does not sound right. "Country" is, then, truly the modern equivalent of "city." The difference is by no means unimportant. The difference indicates that the city is an urban association. The country, as the word indicates, is not necessarily urban, and this is surely due to the feudal past of modern nations. We are separated from Aristotle by a gulf which we must somehow bridge if we wish to understand him. Therefore, we must look for equivalents in our experience in order to understand, to get the experiential analogue to what Aristotle means when he speaks of the *polis*.

Let me now turn to Aristotle's own analysis of the *polis*. What is the character of the *polis*? What is the essential difference between the *polis* and all other associations? Aristotle answers: The end of the *polis* is happiness. All other associations serve a special purpose. The political society is the only association which is directed toward the complete human good, and that is called happiness. Happiness means the practice of moral virtue above everything else, the doing of noble deeds. Aristotle assumes something which is today absolutely

controversial, especially in scientific circles, but which he assumes is not controversial at all among reasonable people; namely, what happiness is. To develop this point fully, we would have to discuss the chapter of his *Rhetoric* where he speaks so clearly and beautifully about what happiness is. When reading that chapter, you will see that our ordinary notion of happiness is not different from the ordinary notion analyzed by Aristotle. What do we mean when calling a man happy? A man who has friends, who has good friends, who has many friends, who has children, and good children, who is healthy, reasonably wealthy, and so on. There is nothing particularly Greek about this. When we call a man happy, we mean, in the first place, that he is a contented man. But, we see from time to time people who are of a very low grade of understanding, perhaps moronic, who smile all the time. They are contented; yet no one would say that they are happy. We mean, then, by happiness a contentedness which is enviable, a reasonable contentedness. This is what all men understand by happiness, and, therefore, it is a good enough beginning for political philosophy, moral philosophy, to speak of happiness thus understood.

Yet, in modern times, surely from the 17th century onward, this beginning was questioned on a ground which, in present-day parlance, would be stated as follows:

Happiness is entirely subjective. What A understands by happiness differs from what B understands by happiness, and even what A understands by happiness is very different before he has had his dinner and after he has had his dinner. If happiness is entirely subjective, it can no longer be relevant for determining the common good. How then shall we find our bearing politically? The answer given by the founders of modern political philosophy was this: While happiness is radically subjective, the conditions of happiness are not. Whatever you may understand by happiness, in order to be happy you must be alive; secondly, you must be able to circulate; thirdly, you must be able to pursue happiness as you understand happiness, and perhaps even as you understand happiness at the moment. So life, liberty, pursuit of happiness are the conditions of happiness, however you understand happiness. They constitute the objective conditions of happiness. They possess that objectivity, that universality, which happiness lacks. Therefore, the function of political society is not to take care that the citizens are happy, that they become doers of noble deeds, as Aristotle called it, but to create the conditions of happiness, to protect them, or to use a technical term, to protect the natural rights of man; for the natural rights of man in the modern sense of the meaning are the conditions of happiness in the sense indicated. Under no circumstance may political society impose any notion of happiness upon the citizenry, for any notion of happiness would be subjective and therefore arbitrary. People will then pursue happiness; each one as he understands happiness. They all strive for happiness. This striving is partly cooperative,

but also partly competitive. This striving produces something like a web. This, I believe, is what is meant primarily by society, in contradistinction to the state.

If this analysis is in principle correct, we arrive at the following conclusion: The state is superior to society because its aim or end — the securing of the conditions of happiness, however happiness may be understood — is objective, i.e., the same for all. On the other hand, society is superior to the state because only as members of society, as distinguished from the state, are we concerned with the end, with happiness itself, and not with the conditions of happiness or the means of happiness. From this point of view, the public, the political, is in the service of the essentially private, of happiness, however one may understand happiness. But this fact that from one point of view the state is superior to society, from another point of view that society is superior to the state, creates a great theoretical difficulty. The solution favored by modern social thought consists in postulating another basis, distinguished from state and society, a kind of matrix for both state and society; this, I believe, is the function of the modern concept of culture or civilization as terms susceptible of being used in the plural.

I have referred to these conditions of happiness, and I have indicated that what they meant were the natural rights, the rights of man. I would like to say a word about this subject with regard to the discussion which we had this morning. This doctrine, which was developed in the 17th and 18th centuries, reminds us, of course, of the traditional natural law teaching, the Thomistic teaching. Outside of Catholic circles, it is rarely admitted, although it is so obvious, that there is a radical difference between the natural law teaching of the 17th and 18th century, and the medieval and classic ancient teaching. To illustrate the difference very briefly by a simple formula, the name which came into use in the 18th century for natural law was the rights of man, whereas the traditional name was natural law. First, "law" was replaced by "rights." When people spoke of law, they always meant the duties primarily, and the rights only derivatively. When Aristotle says that what the law does not command it forbids, he gives us a notion of what law originally meant. (I remember a modern interpreter who said that this is nonsense; the law never commands us to breathe; yet, no one can say that it forbids us to breathe. He did not make the simple reflection that by instituting military service, or perhaps by forbidding suicide, the law commands one to breathe.) Secondly, "nature" is replaced by "man." In the older notion, natural law is part of a larger order, of a hierarchic order indicated by the word, "nature." In the modern view, nature has been replaced by man. Man, taken entirely by himself, is, as it were, the origin of the rights belonging to him. The term, "rights of man," is the moral equivalent to that famous beginning of modern philosophy: Descartes's *ego cogitans*, the thinking ego. In Descartes's moral work, *The Passions*

of the *Soul*, the word, "duty," never occurs; but in the key passage the word, "right," occurs, which I believe is very characteristic.

Let me return to the general reflection about the *polis*. We are frequently misled today by a kind of learning which, if kept in its place, is highly valuable. I mean what the historians and philologists tell us about the Greeks; yet this is not sufficient for understanding what men like Aristotle and Plato meant. We must make a distinction between the pre-philosophic concept of the *polis* and the philosophic concept. I am concerned here only with the philosophic concept as developed by Aristotle especially. The philosophical concept of the *polis* is that the *polis* is the natural society, the society corresponding to the nature of man, society neither too small nor too large for man's reaching his perfection. Man's natural powers, especially his powers of knowing his fellow men and caring for them, are limited. Very roughly said, a *polis* is a society which is not too large for man, for the individual's power of knowing and actively caring. The *polis* is an association in which every man can know not every other — that would be a village — but an acquaintance of every other, so that he is in a position to find out for whom he votes; i.e., to whom he entrusts his life and fortune. The present discussions about metropolitan areas rediscover to some extent what Aristotle meant by the *polis* as the natural association.

But is it sufficient to say that Aristotle's political philosophy is concerned with the *polis*? You would only have to read the beginning of every book of the *Politics*, except the first, in order to see that it is not sufficient. The *polis* is only a provisional indication. The proper subject of the *Politics* is called in Greek, "*politeia*," a derivative from the word, *polis*. The ordinary English translation is "constitution," which is a somewhat misleading translation because, when we speak of a constitution, we do not mean something like the constitution of an animal; we mean something like the law of the land, the fundamental law of the land. Incidentally, the historical origin of our concept of the constitution is the fundamental law. The *politeia*, as Aristotle meant it, has nothing to do with law; it is distinguished from all laws. One can render its meaning by words like the "political order" or the "political order which originates the laws including the so-called constitutional law," or perhaps more simply as the "regime." Examples are democracy, oligarchy, tyranny, etc. These phenomena, to repeat, originate law rather than being constituted by law. We had a discussion today in connection with Kelsen's pure theory of law, of the basic norm, of that which is the origin of the whole legal order. According to Aristotle, that which originates the legal order is the political order, the regime. The character of the society is formed by the regime. Since there is a variety of regimes today, as well as at all times, the question inevitably arises: Which is the preferable regime? Or to state it with the proper simplicity, which is the best regime?



This is, one can say, the most important question for Aristotle. He surely is greatly concerned with discovering the order of rank of the various regimes. One cannot know the truth about any regime if one does not know how good or bad it is. E.g., you do not know anything, to speak of, about democracy if you do not know its virtues and defects. This simple fact points theoretically to the thought of the regime which has no defects, the best regime, and this is indeed the highest theme for Aristotle.

Let us return to the more practical level, to the variety of regimes. This is the subject of Aristotle; not the state, as the subject of political philosophy came to be called in the 19th century. The state as understood in these Victorian doctrines was something politically neutral, whereas the regime as Aristotle understands it is something politically divisive. It does not have to be divisive within a given society because all may be fully satisfied with the established regime. But it is in principle divisive because there will be other regimes elsewhere, and the claims of each of these regimes to be the best necessarily clash. Aristotle's political philosophy is political not only because of its subject matter, but because Aristotle is animated by the political passion, the concern for the best regime.

There is a certain difficulty here, a grave practical and moral problem, which Aristotle indicates in a way that seems to be quite academic. He says, citizen is relative to the regime; i.e., a citizen in a democracy is not necessarily a citizen in an oligarchy, etc. But if citizen is relative to the regime, then surely good citizen is also relative to the regime. Here we see the great difference between the good citizen and the good man. The good man is not relative to a regime, whereas the good citizen necessarily is. This creates some difficulties for many modern readers, although if we look around us we can easily recognize present-day parallels. For example, a good Communist cannot be a good citizen in a democracy, and vice versa. The relation of the regime to what is not the regime, to "society," corresponds to the general metaphysical distinction used by Aristotle between form and matter. Metaphysical means the same as common sensible here. The regime gives to the city its form. What, then, is the matter? All kinds of things, but the most important are the people, or more simply, the inhabitants of the city considered as not affected and molded by the regime. Not the citizens as citizens, for who is and who is not a citizen, is already determined by the regime. The form is higher in dignity than matter; for only the form is directly connected with the end. Therefore, the regime, and not the people on the sub-political level, are connected with the end of civil society.

Again speaking empirically, or common sensibly, every society is characterized by the fact that it looks up to something. Even the society which is wholly materialistic looks up to materialism. Every human being is what he is by the fact that he looks up to something.

Even if he does not look up to anything because he is a slave of his belly, for example, this is only a deficient mode of looking up to something. If we take a simple view of democracy, it looks up to equality, and this gives it its character. I have been told that the travelers of old China — a thousand years ago or more — when they came to a foreign country, to barbarians as they probably called them, they asked them first, "How do you greet or bow to your prince or king?" They were wiser than many present-day anthropologists, because their question was only a too special form of the question of what do you look up to. Every society, or civilization as they say today, has its unity due to the fact that there is a certain *order* to the things which they cherish, to their values, to what they esteem. There would not be a unity if there were not one, and only one, thing which is at the top. This gives a society its character. Aristotle adds that there must be a harmony between that to which a society looks up and the preponderant part of a society, the part of society which sets its tone; i.e., the regime. This, then, is the connection between the "end" and regime, the "form," the preponderant part, which may be the majority but need not be. There were societies in which a small part of the population was the preponderant or authoritative part. There is an essential connection between the *eidos*, the form, the character of a city, and the end to which the city is dedicated. This is an empirical proposition. Here we have come to the difficulty which even very good scholars sometimes fail to solve properly, and I would like to devote the rest of this lecture to this subject.

From his notion of the regime as *the* central and key political phenomenon, Aristotle apparently drew the conclusion that a change of regime transforms a given city into another city, and this seems to be abstruse. How can you say that Athens, when she became oligarchic, was no longer the same city as she was before that change? Aristotle's assertion seems to deny the obvious continuity of a city in spite of all changes of regime. Is it obviously not better to say that the same France which was first an absolute monarchy became thereafter a democracy, than to say that democratic France is a different country from monarchic France? Or generally stated, is it not better to say that the same substance of France takes on successively different forms, which, compared with the substance, are mere forms? Is this not the common sensible way of saying it, as shown by the way in which people write a history of the French constitution, or of the English constitution: the one thing, the same substance, the English constitution, undergoes these and those changes. It goes without saying that Aristotle was not blind to the continuity of the "matter," as distinguished from the discontinuity of the forms. He did not say that the sameness of a city depends exclusively on the sameness of the regime. For, in that case, there would not be, for instance, more than one democratic city. If the form alone establishes the identity, then

there can be only one democratic city. He said that the sameness of the city depends above all on the sameness of the regime, but not exclusively. Nevertheless, what he says runs counter to our notions. It does not run counter to our experience.

In order to see this, we must follow his presentation more closely than is usually done. Aristotle starts from an experience. Immediately after a city has become democratic, the democrats sometimes say of a certain act, such as a certain contractual obligation, debt, etc., that it is not an action of the city, but of the deposed oligarchs, or the deposed tyrant. The democrat, the partisan of democracy, implies that when there is no democracy there is no city which can act. It is, of course, no accident that Aristotle refers to a statement made by democrats as distinguished from oligarchs; Aristotle is always concrete. The oligarchs would not say that when there is a democracy there is no city. But they would say that the city has gone to pieces. This, however, leaves us wondering whether the city which is going to pieces can still be said simply to be. Let us say, then, that for the partisan of any regime, the city is only if it is informed by the regime which he favors. The moderate and sober people reject this extreme view and, therefore, say that the change of regime is a surface event which does not affect the being of the city at all. Those people will say that however relative the citizen may be to the regime, the good citizen is a man who serves his city well under any regime. We are very familiar with this, especially in countries where there have been changes of regime. Let us call these men the patriots, who say the fatherland is first, with the regime a strictly expediential and secondary consideration. The partisans will call the patriots turncoats, because if the regime changes the patriot changes his allegiance. Aristotle is neither a patriot in that simple sense, nor a partisan in that simple sense. He would disagree with both the partisans and the patriots. He says that a change of regime is much more radical than the patriots admit, but less radical than the partisans contend. Through a change of regime the city does not cease to be; the partisans go much too far. But the city becomes another city in a certain respect, in the most important respect. For with a change of regime, the political community becomes dedicated to an end radically different from its earlier end, and, therefore, it is the greatest and most fundamental change which a city can undergo. In making his apparently strange assertion, Aristotle thinks of the highest end to which a city can be dedicated; namely, human excellence. Is any change, he as it were asks us, which a city can undergo comparable in importance to its turning from nobility to baseness, or vice versa? We may say that his point of view is not that of the patriot, nor of the ordinary partisan, but that of the partisan of excellence. He does not say that through a change of regimes a city becomes another city in every respect. For instance, it will remain the same city with regard to obligations which the preceding

regime has undertaken. He fails to answer the question regarding treaty obligations not because he cannot answer it, as some people believe, but because it is not a political question strictly speaking, but rather, as he says, a legal question. Because he was a reasonable man, it is very easy to discern the principle which he would have followed in answering this legal question. If the deposed tyrant undertook obligations which are beneficial to the city, the city ought to honor these obligations. But if the tyrant undertook the obligations merely to feather his own nest or to pay for his bodyguard, then the city, of course, should not pay them.

In order to understand Aristotle's thesis regarding the supremacy of the regime, one has only to consider the phenomenon, which we all know, and of which we have heard so much, known by the name of loyalty. The loyalty demanded from every citizen is not mere loyalty to the bare country, to the country irrespective of the regime, but to the country *informed* by the regime, by the constitution. A fascist or Communist might claim that he undermines the Constitution of the United States out of loyalty to the United States. For, in his opinion, the Constitution is bad for the people of the United States. But his claim to be a loyal citizen will not be recognized. Someone might say that the Constitution could be changed constitutionally so that the regime would cease to be a liberal democracy and become either fascist or Communist, and that every citizen of the United States is then expected to be a loyal fascist or Communist. But no one loyal to liberal democracy, who knows what he is doing, would teach this doctrine, precisely because it is apt to undermine loyalty to liberal democracy. Only when a regime is in the state of complete decay can its transformation into another regime become publicly defensible.

We have come to distinguish between legality and legitimacy. Whatever is legal in a given society derives its ultimate legitimation from something which is the source of all law, ordinary or constitutional, from the legitimating principle — be it the sovereignty of the people, the divine right of kings, or whatever else. The legitimating principle is not simply justice, for there is a variety of principles of legitimacy. The legitimating principle is not natural law, for natural law is, as such, neutral as between democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy. The principle of legitimacy is in each case a specific notion of justice: justice democratically understood, justice oligarchically understood, justice aristocratically understood, etc. This is to say, every political society derives its character from a specific public or political morality, from what it regards as publicly defensible; and this means from what the preponderant part of society, not necessarily the majority, regards as just. A given society may be characterized by extreme permissiveness, but this very permissiveness is in need of being established and defended, and it necessarily has its limits. A permissive society which permits its members every sort of non-permissiveness will soon cease

to be permissive. It will vanish from the face of the earth. Not to see the city in the light of the variety of regimes means not to look at the city as a political man; that is to say, as a man concerned with a specific public morality. The variety of specific public moralities, or of regimes, necessarily gives rise to the question of the best regime, for every kind of regime claims to be the best and, therefore, forces one to face these claims, to meet them by wondering whether a given regime is best or not.

Let me conclude with a remark about a seeming self-contradiction of Aristotle regarding the highest theme of his *Politics*. He bases his thematic discussion of the best regime on the principle that the highest end of man, happiness, is the same for the individual and the city. As he makes clear, this principle would be accepted as such by everyone because it is a common sensible principle. The difficulty arises from the fact — and this arises more for Aristotle than for the ordinary citizen — that the highest end of the individual is contemplation, and not the doing of noble deeds. Aristotle seems to solve the difficulty by asserting that the city is as capable of the contemplative life as the individual. Yet it is obvious that the city is capable, at best, only of an analogue to the contemplative life. Aristotle reaches this apparent result only by an explicit abstraction appropriate to a political inquiry, strictly and narrowly conceived, from the full meaning of the best life of the individual. In such an inquiry, the trans-political life, the super-political, the life of the mind in contradistinction to the political life, comes to sight only as a limit of the political. Man is more than the citizen or the city. Man transcends the city, however, only by what is best in him. This is reflected in the fact that there are examples of men of the highest excellence, whereas Aristotle has no example of cities of the highest excellence, cities informed by the best regime. Man transcends the city only by pursuing true happiness, not by pursuing happiness, however happiness may be understood.

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